

LUNCH AND LEARN GANG: Salamanders of Tennessee

November 6, 12 -1 p.m.

Region II Conference Room

Salamanders, those wet four-legged amphibians with tails that can be found under damp rocks and wiggle-walking across moss and even stream bottoms, are unusual and interesting creatures! By body shape alone, they sometimes resemble lizards, but lizards have scaly skin and claws and external ear openings. Large aquatic salamanders have even been confused with eels as well.

These secretive, quiet, nocturnal animals are quite content to mind their own business, often hiding under rocks or under moist leaf litter. Out of sight during the day, they are hardly more visible at night. During their breeding seasons, when they migrate to and from their breeding ponds or after heavy rains, you might have more of a chance of seeing them.

Tennessee is rich with salamander diversity especially since the Appalachian Mountains are considered a worldwide hotspot for salamanders. Mark Thurman, TWRA Region III Nongame Biologist and our next Lunch and Learn Gang presenter, will be showing us photographs and telling us about Tennessee's incredible variety of salamanders.

They can be very colorful (red salamander-red with black spots); they can be very little (pygmy salamander-2 inches); they can be large (hellbender-29 inches); they can look like mud (mudpuppy-mottled brown); they can have long slender tails and short stubby ones; a few even have external gills. The state amphibian is actually represented by a salamander, the unusual and rare Tennessee cave salamander.

Salamanders were able to make the transition to land locomotion and air breathing, during their evolutionary progress, but were never able to abandon the moisture they still require. So even though they inhabit a diversity of habitats, from upland wooded forests to streams and swamps, both aquatic and terrestrial, water needs to be present.

Join us for this excursion into the wet world of the salamander! And while you're there, pick up your free copy of the new beautiful "Salamanders of Tennessee" poster.

Hosted by the I&E Department and held on the first Thursday of each month, except July, Lunch and Learn Gang presentations are about natural resource related topics and last about 30-45 minutes, allowing time for discussion during the allotted lunch hour. If you would like to make a presentation, if you have topics of personal interest you would like us to address, or if you know someone

who offers an interesting program, contact Patricia Miller at (615) 781-5276 or by e-mail: Patricia.Miller@state.tn.us.